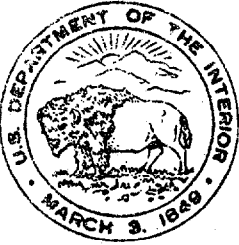


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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release JULY 8, 1959

LETTER TO GOVERNOR EGAN ON ARCTIC WILDLIFE RANGE

Secretary Fred A. Seaton today sent the following letter to Governor William A. Egan of Alaska regarding the Arctic Wildlife Range:

Dear Governor Egan:

In your letter of May 23, acknowledged on June 10, you expressed concern about the proposal to establish an Arctic Wildlife Range in extreme northeastern Alaska. You state that you believe the proposed withdrawal would retard other essential State programs, and request its further consideration by this Department. Your letter makes specific reference to three State programs: land selection, highway construction, and wildlife management.

According to my information, the funds for highway construction to which Alaska would be entitled under the omnibus bill are \$37,000,000. This entitlement would be contingent on the State's furnishing a matching sum of \$5,600,000. Since approximately 5,000,000 acres of the proposed wildlife range are already withdrawn under Public Land Order 82 of January 22, 1943, the effective additional acreage that would be withdrawn if the Arctic Wildlife Range is established would be only 4,000,000 acres. This would indicate that the sum Alaska would have to furnish for entitlement to the \$37,000,000 would be \$5,875,000 rather than \$5,600,000. Unless the State furnishes funds to match the total entitlement of \$37,000,000, the additional obligation would be proportionately less than \$275,000. The Arctic Wildlife Range will in no way reduce the amount to which the State is entitled under the Federal highway program.

And I am certain that you realize that this Department is proceeding as rapidly as possible to restore to the public domain lands now in withdrawn status which are not absolutely necessary for essential Federal activities in Alaska. As this program continues, the withdrawals restored will, no doubt, completely offset the effect of the additional lands withdrawn by the Arctic Wildlife Range so far as road funds requirements are concerned.

The proposed wildlife range will be one of the world's great wildlife areas. The great diversity of vegetation and topography (including magnificent Mount Michaelson with its unusual Arctic glaciers) in this compact area, together with its relatively undisturbed condition, led to its selection as the most suitable opportunity for protecting it as one of our remaining wildlife and wilderness frontiers. Increased use of the area will necessitate some development, the

expense of which will be borne by the Federal Government rather than by the State of Alaska. Of course, receipts from expenditures by tourists and hunters will directly benefit the economy of the State.

Although under legislation now in effect there is authority to set aside area such as this and prohibit mineral exploration and development entirely, our proposed bill would provide that all mineral deposits in the proposed wildlife range of the classes and kinds subject to location, entry, and patent under the mining laws shall be, exclusive of the land containing them, subject to disposal under such laws. This area would, therefore, be available for full development of the mineral, oil and gas potential.

We should like to emphasize that the Arctic Wildlife Range will be open to hunting and fishing under the laws of the State of Alaska. Our goal is the preservation of this area for the enjoyment of future generations and as one of the basic resources upon which much of the recreation industry is dependent.

We believe that the enactment of our proposed bill would be in the interest of Alaska. We hope that you will reconsider your objections to this proposed legislation and lend your support to its enactment.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd) Fred A. Seaton
Secretary of the Interior

Hon. William A. Egan
Governor of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska

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